



2/27/2023

Dear Public Safety Committee Members,

Re: Support for Bill HF 1712

On behalf of Face to Face Health & Counseling Service, I would like to express my emphatic support for Bill HF 1712 to increase funding for prevention services, intervention services, and barrier reduction services relating to youth involved or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal or juvenile justice system.

Face to Face's SafeZone drop-in center provides services and support that help young people develop independent living skills, develop positive relationships, and develop conflict resolution and decision making skills. SafeZone's YIP program includes peer support groups, case management, recording arts programming, and mental health services. In combination with the other resources available at SafeZone, the YIP services help young people stabilize their circumstances and develop skills for their future.

This support is critical for the Face to Face young people (11-24) who experience significant disparities related to health, housing, and other life outcomes. Last year, 87% of clients at SafeZone were BIPOC, including 64% who identified as Black/African American. In addition, 11.5% of our clients identified as LGBTQ+, and we have long been a trusted provider for LGBTQ+ youth. Some of the specific challenges and barriers experienced by our youth include housing instability or homelessness, racism and other forms of oppression, sexual exploitation and/or trafficking, domestic violence, lack of health insurance, trauma histories, among others.

The demand for our services has increased dramatically, as has the cost of operations. **The average number of youth visits at SafeZone per month has increased by 62% this year: from 791 in FY22 to 1,284 so far in FY23.** An increase in YIP funding would allow us to continue expanding our services to more youth in need, resulting in important outcomes such as:

- Increase in independent living skills and build community through case management and peer-led support groups
- Increase in self-determination and build on strengths to realize their potential.
- Increase in ability to develop positive, healthy relationships.
- Increase in conflict resolution and decision-making skills through therapy.

Thank you for supporting Bill HF1712, allowing us to support more youth in these challenging times.

Hanna Getachew, Executive Director